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United Nations

Report of the Committee on Information

Thirtieth session (28 April-9 May 2008)

General Assembly
Official Records
Sixty-third Session
Supplement No. 21 (A/63/21)

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Note

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cape Verde
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Luxembourg
Madagascar
Malta
Mexico
Moldova
Monaco
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands

Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Suriname
Switzerland
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zimbabwe

Chapter II
Organizational questions

A. Opening of the session

2. The organizational meeting of the thirtieth session of the Committee on Information was held on 28 April 2008 at United Nations Headquarters. The session was opened by the Acting Chairman of the Committee, Marc Emilian Morar (Romania).

B. Election of officers

3. Following the departure of Rudolf Christen, Chairman (Switzerland), and Estevão Umba Alberto, Vice-Chairman (Angola), at the end of their tour of duty at United Nations Headquarters, Andreas Baum (Switzerland) was elected to serve as Chairman and Xavier Santa Rosa (Angola) as a Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2007-2008 term. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period from 2007 to 2008 are as follows:

Chairman:
Andreas Baum (Switzerland)

Vice-Chairmen:
Xavier Santa Rosa (Angola)
Marcelo Suárez Salvia (Argentina)
Marc Emilian Morar (Romania)

Rapporteur:
Hossein Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

4. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/2008/1):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Statement by the Chairman.
5. Admission of new members.
6. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.
7. General debate.
8. Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General.
9. Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.

10. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

5. The Committee held its general debate from 28 to 30 April 2008. On 28 April, in the afternoon, the Department of Public Information, led by its Under-Secretary-General, held an interactive dialogue with Member States.

6. For its consideration of agenda item 7, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information (part one) (A/AC.198/2008/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information (part two) (A/AC.198/2008/3).

7. The Department had requested the Committee to review its Strategic Framework for 2010-2011 (A/63/6 (Prog. 23)) at the Committee's thirtieth session. Following consultations with Member States, the Committee decided to defer the consideration of the document until its thirty-first session, in 2009.

D. Observers

8. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Afghanistan, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Slovenia and United Arab Emirates. The Holy See and Palestine also participated in the session as observers.

9. Representatives of the International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization also participated in the session as observers.

Chapter III
General debate

10. Statements in the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee on Information: Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China), Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Cape Verde, China, Croatia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, France (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Rio Group), Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of Arab States), Thailand, Ukraine, United States of America and Yemen. Statements were also made by Palestine and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, both of which attended the session as observers.

11. The general debate was preceded by statements by the Chairman of the Committee and the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information of the Department of Public Information.

12. In taking up the substantive questions before the Committee, speakers emphasized the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. One speaker, addressing the Committee on behalf of a large group, said that his group fully supported the work of the Department in promoting and advancing the work of the Organization through continued campaigns on issues of importance to the international community. Emphasizing the need for providing accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the Member States and the wider international community on the work of the United Nations, the speaker said that it was important that there be a consistent message between the Department and any other entity that provided information on the United Nations.

13. Another speaker, addressing the meeting on behalf of a large group, observed that the work done by the Department of Public Information contributed to a better understanding of the tasks that the United Nations carried out in various fields. His group recognized the efforts by the Department to strengthen cooperation with other organs of the United Nations, and emphasized that strengthening such cooperation would contribute to a broader and truthful dissemination of the tasks the Organization carried out in order to comply with its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. Another speaker welcomed with satisfaction the Department's elaboration of a strategic workplan based on the priority themes of the Organization. The speaker said that those efforts should be pursued with particular attention to the needs of Member States, in particular the countries of the southern hemisphere, Africa and the least developed countries. Another speaker expressed the hope that the Department would continue to enhance its efficiency by coordinating and networking with the organizations within the United Nations system, and creating partnerships, including with civil society, within its existing resources.

14. Speaking on behalf of a large group, another speaker said that the Committee needed activity reports with precise figures and comments that clearly evaluated results, spelled out differences and proposed solutions for resolving them in order to do a good job. The speaker said that his group had set three priorities for the current session. The first was to improve the effectiveness of the Department within its budget constraints. That applied in particular to the information centres, which were essential instruments for the Department to promote the United Nations and its main issues. The second was to advance multilingualism and the third was to streamline the resolution on questions relating to information. Another speaker, arguing against "the pitfalls of politicization and of excessively ideological positions", expressed the opinion that the Committee, by basing its work on the search for pragmatic and common sense solutions, should be able to produce clearer and more specific guidelines for the Department.

15. Commenting on the role of the Committee on Information, one speaker argued that the Committee had a central role in examining United Nations public information policies and activities "with a view to promoting the idea of a just and more effective world information and communications order". To achieve that goal, the speaker said that the Committee should increase its efforts to formulate an effective and efficient United Nations information policy that would ensure a greater understanding and respect among peoples belonging to various societies, cultures and religions. Another speaker observed that the defining feature of the work of the Committee on Information lay in its relationship with the Department. The speaker said that the resultant cooperative effort must constantly seek to improve upon the delivery of relevant information inputs to millions of users worldwide.

16. Several speakers discussed the importance of achieving linguistic parity in the work of the Department. Speaking on behalf of a large group, one speaker noted his group's concern about the increasing gap among websites in different official languages and said that more resources should be allocated to achieve equality among all official languages in order to bridge that gap, taking into account the specificity of some of the official languages that used non-Latin and bidirectional scripts. Another speaker, echoing a similar view, said that his Group had noted the efforts that had been made by the Department, but was of the view that possible further improvement of the Arab page on the website was needed. More effort was required in order to achieve full parity by allocating human and material resources in a manner that took into account the peculiar nature of the Arabic language. Advocating multilingualism, another speaker, speaking on behalf of a large group, acknowledged that much had been done, but that the situation was not satisfactory. He said that his group would pay close attention to make sure that all the resources available to the Department for that purpose were indeed used to achieve the common objectives.

17. Another speaker, also representing a large group, referred to the correct concept of the working languages of the Organization. He said that the correct concept and real definition of the official and working languages of the United Nations was contained in the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (article 51), in the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council (rule 41), in the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council (article 32) and in the provisional rules of the Committees of the Economic and Social Council (rule 29). Stating the group's position, the speaker noted that mistaking the working languages of the Secretariat as the working languages of the organs that composed the United

Nations constituted a denial of the principle of multilingualism, which both the General Assembly and the Committee on Information considered of utmost importance. The Group therefore insisted in underlining the obligation of the Secretariat to watch for parity among the official languages, he said.

18. Another speaker argued that in order to ensure that people in all parts of the world received as complete information as possible about the United Nations, it was fundamental that the United Nations speak in as many languages as possible, not only in its official languages. The speaker referred to a recent agreement between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, which, she said, would further increase the cooperation between the United Nations and the Community and facilitate the dissemination of information about the United Nations in Portuguese-speaking countries. Another speaker, while applauding the Department's efforts to foster parity among the six official languages and to enhance accessibility for the disabled, suggested that, given the limitation of resources, it would be practical to focus on more widely used languages in strengthening the United Nations website.

19. Several speakers suggested that the traditional means of communications, such as radio and print media, continued to be important in achieving effective promotion of the message of the Organization. One speaker, representing a large group, argued that such traditional means were still the fundamental means to obtain information in developing countries. He said that his group believed that the presentation of radio programmes should be encouraged in as many languages as possible, including Portuguese and indigenous languages. Another speaker, representing a large group, asked the Department to continue to strengthen its relationship with radio stations and the local journalists of Member States.

20. Commenting on the uneven access to technological development and new information and communications technologies, one speaker noted that more than 2 billion people had never used a telephone and did not know the word "Internet". It was, therefore, worthwhile to reconsider approaches to the technological revolution. It was necessary to begin to devise practical ways to rationally use information technology to close the technological and social gaps, the speaker said. Several other speakers asked the Department to play a more vigorous role in bridging the current digital divide between developed and developing countries.

21. Several speakers underlined the importance of closer cooperation between the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. One speaker, representing a large group, took note of the current cooperation among those departments and of the effort of the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on peacekeeping operations. The group hoped to receive more information on the functions and scope of orientation and support activities that the Department of Public Information carried out, taking into account the creation of the Public Affairs Unit in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. Another speaker urged the Department of Public Information to highlight success stories and to provide accurate, impartial and timely information on the regular activities of United Nations peacekeepers, including, the speaker said, the work they often did that went beyond the routine keeping of the peace and the call of duty. Another speaker, referring to the important work being done by peacekeepers from his country, asked the Department of Public Information to publicize the work of United

Nations peacekeepers with a national angle. Referring to the sixtieth anniversary, in 2008, of United Nations peacekeeping, one speaker noted that the joint efforts of the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support had resulted in more accurate, comprehensive and timely information on United Nations peacekeeping.

22. A number of speakers referred to the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and asked the Department of Public Information to play a more vigorous role in promoting the dialogue among civilizations. Several speakers deplored all acts of insult and incitement against religions and their sacred principles and percepts. Several speakers welcomed the Secretary-General's condemnation of the airing of a film that had hurt the sentiments of many cultural and religious groups and also threatened the stability of many societies. One speaker asked the Department to redouble its efforts not only to sensitize the media but also Member States on the need to understand and respect various cultures and beliefs. The same sentiment was expressed by another speaker who, speaking on behalf of a large group, noted that the Department had the responsibility to raise awareness in order to consolidate respect and understanding of different cultures, so as to promote the value of peace.

23. Some speakers applauded the Department for its outreach programme on the Holocaust. Speakers also lauded the Department for its efforts to mark the first International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

24. One speaker, representing a large group, commended the Department for its implementation of the Special Programme on the Question of Palestine. The programme, he said, was useful in offering an annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to assist them in developing their media capacity and skills. Several other speakers reiterated the commendation of the Special Programme and emphasized its importance in raising global awareness on the Question of Palestine, as well as on its training activities. Another speaker called on the Department to undertake more activities to contribute to the efforts "so that the Palestinians could enjoy their right to self-determination and to an independent State".

25. Several speakers commented on the work and activities of the network of United Nations information centres. A speaker, addressing the Committee on behalf of a large group, urged that all possible measures be taken to strengthen the United Nations information centres. He said that the centres were a vital source for the flow of information and that they helped to bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries in terms of access of information and communications technologies. Another speaker noted that the information centres not only represented the Department of Public Information as its field offices but also symbolized a bridge that connected the local people with the United Nations and its activities. Another speaker, representing a large group, noted with satisfaction the initiatives taken by the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Speakers also took note of the steps taken by the Department to strengthen the information centres, including through increased cooperation among them at the regional level.

26. One speaker, representing a large group, emphasized that any decision to reorganize the information centres must be made in close consultation with the host countries and take into account the geographical, linguistic and technological characters of different regions. Another speaker expressed support for the Department's efforts to rationalize the United Nations information centres and hoped that the Department would link the United Nations information centre regionalization process with a system-wide evaluation of all United Nations offices worldwide. He said his country would like to see the United Nations continue efforts to house all United Nations system country offices under one roof and with one central public information unit. Another speaker, representing a large group, encouraged the Department and Member States to work together to explore creative ways to ensure the necessary support and progressive strengthening of the network of information centres and services. She also regretted that despite the offer by the Government of Angola to host and provide rent-free and maintenance-free premises for a United Nations Information Centre in Luanda, no progress had been made towards the creation of an information centre to address the special needs of Portuguese-speaking countries.

27. Several speakers commented on the Department's outreach programme. One speaker welcomed the dynamic partnerships between the Department and civil society, educators, students, celebrities and the private sector. He said that such partnerships made it possible to ensure transmission of an increasingly integrated message by the United Nations. Another speaker commended the Department for its increased cooperation with civil society organizations and its enhanced focus on young people as a strategic audience for its work. Reaching young people should be a top priority in all actions of the international community to promote the values and work of the Organization. He said that the Model United Nations programme, in which 400,000 students participated worldwide every year, was a good example of how to educate young people about the United Nations.

28. Referring to a request by the Department of Public Information to rename the Dag Hammarskjöld Library the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre, a speaker, representing a large group, emphasized that any process to change the name and methods of operation of the United Nations libraries should continue to respect previously agreed mandates and General Assembly resolutions and be subject to prior intergovernmental discussions and agreement. Regarding the application of technological innovations for the provision of library services, he also urged the Department to take into account the physical and other challenges faced by Member States in being able to effectively utilize such technology.

29. The observance of World Press Freedom Day was noted by several speakers. Speaking on behalf of a large group, one speaker observed that the annual observance was particularly important for the Committee on Information. Every year, the Committee reaffirmed in the first part of its resolution the principles of freedom of information, independence, plurality and diversity of the media and urged all States to ensure that journalists could work freely and effectively. Every year, the Committee also resolutely condemned all attacks against all journalists. In 2007, 65 journalists had been killed and so far in 2008, 8 had been killed, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. That was far too many and Member States had a collective responsibility to put an end to it, he said. Another speaker, noting with alarm the increasing number of attacks on journalists worldwide, said that his

Government stood ready to contribute to all efforts that would preserve and protect the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information.

30. The committee discussed the proposal made by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information in his statement for the *UN Chronicle* to evolve into a journal entitled "UN Affairs". Delegations agreed to request that the Department provide them with detailed information on the project, including the concept and a pilot copy of the journal, so as to discuss the possibility of its approval during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

Chapter IV

Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session

31. At its 5th plenary meeting, the Committee on Information proceeded to adopt its draft report, including two draft resolutions and a draft decision, by consensus. A text, submitted by the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, formed the basis of negotiations for a draft resolution, which involved two negotiating groups, the Group of 77 and China and the European Union, as well as other Member States.

Draft resolution A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[1]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[2]

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communications policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/62/21).

[2] A/62/205.

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communications capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communications technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim at, in addition to bilateral cooperation, providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communications systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communications technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communications technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,[3] which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Emphasizing the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Reaffirming its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, establishing the Department, which states in paragraph 2 of annex I that "the activities of the

[3] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September-28 October 1980*, vol. I, *Resolutions*, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

Department should be so organized and directed as to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world",

Emphasizing that the contents of public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations and that a culture of communications and transparency should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive, timely and relevant information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Recalling the comprehensive review of the work of the Department of Public Information, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, as well as the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change"[4] and Assembly resolutions 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and 60/109 B of 8 December 2005, which provided an opportunity to take due steps to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department and to maximize the use of its resources,

Expressing its concern that the gap in information and communications technology between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and communications technologies, and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances in the present development of information and communications technologies in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

Recognizing that developments in information and communications technologies open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries, and, at the same time, emphasizing that the development of these technologies poses challenges and risks and could lead to the further widening of disparities between and within countries,

Recalling its resolution 61/266 of 16 May 2007 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages of the United Nations in the activities of the Department of Public Information, with the aim of eliminating the disparity between the use of English and the five other official languages,

Welcoming Antigua and Barbuda and Zambia to membership in the Committee on Information,

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[4] A/57/387 and Corr.1.

I
Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I), in which it established the Department of Public Information, and all other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly related to the activities of the Department, and requests the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

2. *Also reaffirms* that the United Nations remains the indispensable foundation of a peaceful and just world and that its voice must be heard in a clear and effective manner, and emphasizes the essential role of the Department of Public Information in this context;

3. *Stresses* the importance of the clear, timely, accurate and comprehensive provision of information by the Secretariat to Member States, upon their request, within the framework of existing mandates and procedures;

4. *Reaffirms* the central role of the Committee on Information in United Nations public information policies and activities, including the prioritization of those activities, and decides that recommendations relating to the programme of the Department of Public Information shall originate, to the extent possible, in the Committee and shall be considered by the Committee;

5. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, following the priorities laid down by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/235 of 22 December 2006, and guided by the United Nations Millennium Declaration[5] and reaffirming the 2005 World Summit Outcome,[6] to pay particular attention to peace and security, development and human rights and to major issues such as the eradication of poverty, including the global food crisis, conflict prevention, sustainable development, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent;

6. *Also requests* the Department of Public Information to pay particular attention to progress in implementing the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and the outcomes of the major related United Nations summits and conferences in carrying out its activities;

7. *Further requests* the Department of Public Information and its network of United Nations information centres to play an active role in raising public awareness of the global challenge of climate change, and encourages the Department to pay particular attention to the actions taken in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, especially in the context of the forthcoming sessions of the Conference of the Parties and of the meetings of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol to be held in Poznan, Poland, from 1 to 12 December 2008 and in Copenhagen from 30 November to 11 December 2009;

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[5] See resolution 55/2.

[6] See resolution 60/1.

8. *Reaffirms* the need to enhance the technological infrastructure of the Department of Public Information on a continuous basis in order to widen its outreach and continue to improve the United Nations website;

II
General activities of the Department of Public Information

9. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information;[7]

10. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to maintain its commitment to a culture of evaluation and to continue to evaluate its products and activities with the objective of improving their effectiveness, and to continue to cooperate and coordinate with Member States and the Office of Internal Oversight Services;

11. *Reaffirms* the importance of more effective coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure consistency in the messages of the Organization;

12. *Encourages* continued collaboration between the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the promotion of culture and in the fields of education and communication, bridging the existing gap between the developed and the developing countries;

13. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information must prioritize its work programme, while respecting existing mandates and in line with regulation 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation,[8] to focus its message and better concentrate its efforts and to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms;

14. *Notes* the efforts of the Department of Public Information to continue to publicize the work and decisions of the General Assembly, and requests the Department to continue to enhance its working relationship with the Office of the President of the General Assembly;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations website and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information in all official languages about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

16. *Requests* the Department of Public Information and content-providing offices of the Secretariat to ensure that United Nations publications are produced in a cost-effective manner and to continue to coordinate closely with all other entities,

[7] A/AC.198/2008/2 and A/AC.198/2008/3.

[8] ST/SGB/2000/8.

including all other departments of the Secretariat and funds and programmes of the United Nations system, in order to avoid duplication, within their respective mandates, in the issuance of United Nations publications;

17. *Emphasizes* that the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and where appropriate, other countries with special needs, and that the activities of the Department should contribute to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

18. *Notes* the issuance of daily press releases, and requests the Department of Public Information to continue to improve their production process and streamline their format, structure and length, keeping in mind the views of Member States, including their views on expanding them to the other official languages;

19. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts of the Department of Public Information to work at the local level with other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to enhance the coordination of their communications activities, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirty-first session on progress achieved in this regard and on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group;

20. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information, recognizing the importance of audio-visual archives in preserving our common heritage, to continue to examine its policies and activities regarding the durable preservation of its radio, television and photographic archives and to take action within existing resources in ensuring that such archives are preserved and are accessible, and encourages the Department to work further with all interested partners in order to reach that objective;

Multilingualism and public information

21. *Emphasizes* the importance of making appropriate use and equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all the activities of the Department of Public Information, including in presentations to the Committee on Information, with the aim of eliminating the disparity between the use of English and the five other official languages;

22. *Reiterates* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all the official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities and to include this aspect in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information, bearing in mind the principle of parity in all six official languages, while respecting the workloads of all the official United Nations languages;

23. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to enhance multilingualism in all its activities, and stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 61/266 in ensuring that the texts of all new public documents in all six official languages and information materials of the United Nations are made available daily through the United Nations website and are accessible to Member States without delay;

24. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue towards completion of the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents on the United Nations website in all six official languages on a priority basis, so that these archives are also available to Member States through that medium;

Bridging the digital divide

25. *Recalls with satisfaction* its resolution 60/252 of 27 March 2006, in which it endorsed the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society,[9] as adopted at the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, and proclaimed 17 May annual World Information Society Day, recalls the adoption of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action[10] at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003, and in this regard requests the Department of Public Information to contribute to the celebration of this event and to play a role in raising awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communications technologies can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide;

26. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information to contribute to raising the awareness of the international community of the importance of the implementation of the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society;

Network of United Nations information centres

27. *Emphasizes* the importance of the network of United Nations information centres in enhancing the public image of the United Nations and in disseminating messages on the United Nations to local populations, especially in developing countries;

28. *Welcomes* the work done by the network of United Nations information centres in favour of the publication of United Nations information materials and the translation of important documents in languages other than the official languages of the United Nations, with a view to reaching the widest possible spectrum of audiences and extending the United Nations message to all the corners of the world in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization, and encourages the continuation of efforts in this regard;

29. *Stresses* the importance of rationalizing the network of United Nations information centres, and, in this regard, requests the Secretary-General to continue to make proposals in this direction, including through the redeployment of resources where necessary, and to report to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions;

30. *Reaffirms* that the rationalization of United Nations information centres must be carried out on a case-by-case basis in consultation with all concerned Member States in which existing information centres are located, the countries served by those information centres and other interested countries in the region, taking into consideration the distinctive characteristics of each region;

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[9] See A/60/687.

[10] See A/C.2/59/3, annex.

31. *Recognizes* that the network of United Nations information centres, especially in developing countries, should continue to enhance its impact and activities, including through strategic communications support, and calls upon the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of this approach to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions;

32. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information, through the information centres, to strengthen its cooperation with all other United Nations entities at the country level, in order to enhance coherence in communications and to avoid duplication of work;

33. *Stresses* the importance of taking into account the special needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of information and communications technology for the effective flow of information in those countries;

34. *Also stresses* that the Department of Public Information, through the network of United Nations information centres, should continue to promote public awareness of and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in local languages has the strongest impact on local populations;

35. *Further stresses* the importance of efforts to strengthen the outreach activities of the United Nations to those Member States remaining outside the network of United Nations information centres, and encourages the Secretary-General, within the context of rationalization, to extend the services of the network of United Nations information centres to those Member States;

36. *Stresses* that the Department of Public Information should continue to review the allocation of both staff and financial resources to the United Nations information centres in developing countries, emphasizing the needs of the least developed countries;

37. *Encourages* the network of United Nations information centres to continue to develop web pages in local languages, encourages the Department of Public Information to provide necessary resources and technical facilities, and encourages host countries to respond to the needs of the information centres;

38. *Takes note* of the proposal by the Secretary-General to work closely with the Governments concerned to explore the possibility of identifying rent-free premises, while taking into account the economic condition of the host countries and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial resources for the information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

39. *Also takes note* of the strengthening of the information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria, and encourages the Secretary-General to explore the strengthening of other centres, especially in Africa, in cooperation with the Member States concerned and within existing resources;

40. *Recalls* the offer made by the Government of Angola to host a United Nations information centre in Luanda to address the special needs of Portuguese-speaking African countries, through the provision of rent-free premises, and regrets the lack of progress in this regard, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirty-first session on the necessary measures,

including the budgetary requirements, to accommodate those needs, as well as any proposal to move this process forward;

III
Strategic communications services

41. *Reaffirms* the role of the strategic communications services in devising and disseminating United Nations messages by developing communications strategies, in close collaboration with the substantive departments, United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, in full compliance with the legislative mandates;

Promotional campaigns

42. *Appreciates* the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting, through its campaigns, issues of importance to the international community, such as the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the progress made in implementing the internationally agreed development goals, United Nations reform, the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, disarmament, decolonization, human rights, including the rights of women and children and of persons with disabilities, strategic coordination in humanitarian relief, especially in natural disasters and other crises, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases, the needs of the African continent and combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as dialogue among civilizations, the culture of peace and tolerance and the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster;

43. *Commends* the role of the Department of Public Information in observing the first International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and looks forward to its further work in promoting the establishment of the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade;

44. *Requests* the Department, in this regard, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of these and other important global issues;

45. *Stresses* the need to continue the renewed emphasis in support of Africa's development, in particular by the Department of Public Information, in order to promote awareness in the international community of the nature of the critical economic and social situation in Africa and of the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development;[11]

46. *Recognizes* the role of the Department of Public Information and its network of United Nations information centres in commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

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[11] A/57/304, annex.

Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping operations

47. *Commends* the role of the Department of Public Information and its network of United Nations information centres in commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping;

48. *Requests* the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department of Public Information from the planning stage of future peacekeeping operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support;

49. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role, in close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, in the process of selecting public information staff for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, invites the Department of Public Information to second public information staff who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution in accordance with Chapter XV, Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

50. *Emphasizes* the importance of the peacekeeping gateway on the United Nations website, and requests the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts in supporting the peacekeeping missions to further develop their websites;

51. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to continue their cooperation in raising awareness of the new realities, far-reaching successes and challenges faced by peacekeeping operations, especially multidimensional and complex ones, and the recent surge in United Nations peacekeeping activities, and welcomes efforts by the three Departments to develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy on current challenges facing United Nations peacekeeping;

52. *Requests* the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to continue to cooperate in implementing an effective outreach programme to explain the zero-tolerance policy of the Organization regarding sexual exploitation and abuse and to inform the public on the outcome of all such cases involving peacekeeping personnel, including cases where allegations are ultimately found to be legally unproven, and also inform the public on the adoption of the Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel;[12]

[12] Resolution 62/214, annex.

Role of the Department of Public Information in strengthening dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace as means of enhancing understanding among nations

53. *Recalls* its resolutions on dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace,[13] requests the Department of Public Information, while ensuring the pertinence and relevance of subjects for promotional campaigns under this issue, to continue to provide the necessary support for the dissemination of information pertaining to dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace, as well as the initiative on the Alliance of Civilizations, and to take due steps in fostering the culture of dialogue among civilizations and promoting cultural understanding, tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion or belief and effective enjoyment by all of all human rights and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, recognizes the efforts made by the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations, and takes note of the initiatives launched at the first Alliance of Civilizations Forum, held in Madrid on 15 and 16 January 2008;

IV
News services

54. *Stresses* that the central objective of the news services implemented by the Department of Public Information is the timely delivery of accurate, objective and balanced news and information emanating from the United Nations system in all four mass media, namely, print, radio, television and the Internet, to the media and other audiences worldwide, with the overall emphasis on multilingualism, and reiterates its request to the Department to ensure that all news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of bias;

55. *Emphasizes* the importance of the Department of Public Information continuing to draw the attention of world media to stories that do not obtain prominent coverage, through the initiative entitled "Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About" and through video and audio coverage by United Nations Television and United Nations Radio;

Traditional means of communication

56. *Welcomes* the initiative of United Nations Radio, which remains one of the most effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, to enhance its live radio broadcasting service by making more frequently updated reports in all six official languages and features available to broadcasters on a daily basis on all United Nations activities, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to make every effort to achieve parity in the six official languages in United Nations Radio productions;

57. *Notes* the efforts being made by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages, with the addition of Portuguese and Kiswahili, as well as in other languages where possible;

[13] Resolutions 52/15, 53/22, 53/25, 55/23, 56/6, 59/142 and 60/4.

58. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters to extend the United Nations message to all the corners of the world in an accurate and impartial way, and also requests the Radio and Television Service of the Department to continue to take full advantage of the technological infrastructure made available in recent years;

United Nations website

59. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations website is an essential tool for the media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, Member States and the general public, and, in this regard, reiterates the continued need for efforts by the Department of Public Information to maintain and improve it;

60. *Recognizes* the efforts made by the Department of Public Information to implement the basic accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities to the United Nations website, and calls upon the Department to continue to work towards compliance with accessibility requirements on all new and updated pages of the website, with the aim of ensuring its accessibility for persons with different kinds of disabilities;

61. *Takes note* of the fact that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations website has improved,[14] and, in this regard, requests the Department of Public Information, in coordination with content-providing offices, to further improve the actions taken to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations website, and especially reiterates its request to ensure the adequate distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations website among all official languages, taking into consideration the specificity of each official language;

62. *Welcomes* the cooperative arrangements undertaken by the Department of Public Information with academic institutions to increase the number of web pages available in some official languages, and requests the Secretary-General to extend those arrangements to all the official languages of the United Nations;

63. *Recalls* paragraph 74 of its resolution 60/109 B, and in this regard reiterates that all content-providing offices in the Secretariat should continue their efforts to translate into all official languages all English-language materials and databases posted on the United Nations website and to make them available on the respective language websites in the most practical, efficient and cost-effective manner;

64. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to take full advantage of new developments in information technology in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly in its resolutions and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

65. *Recognizes* that some official languages use non-Latin and bidirectional scripts and that technological infrastructures and supportive applications in the United Nations are based on Latin script, which leads to difficulties in processing

[14] See A/AC.198/2007/3.

non-Latin and bidirectional scripts, and urges the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management to further collaborate with the Department of Public Information and to continue its efforts to ensure that technological infrastructures and supportive applications in the United Nations fully support Latin, non-Latin and bidirectional scripts in order to enhance the equality of all official languages on the United Nations website;

66. *Welcomes* the continuing growth in the popularity of the e-mail news alerts service provided by the Department of Public Information on the United Nations News Centre portal in English and French, and encourages the Department to consult with the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management and to explore, as a matter of priority, ways of upgrading the technical capabilities of the service and providing it in all official languages;

V
Library services

67. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information to continue to lead the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries and further commends the steps taken by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the other member libraries of the Steering Committee to align their activities, services and outputs more closely with the goals, objectives and operational priorities of the Organization;

68. *Reiterates* the need to maintain a multilingual collection of books, periodicals and other materials in hard copy, accessible to Member States, ensuring that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

69. *Takes note* of the initiative taken by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in its capacity as the focal point, to expand the scope of the regional training and knowledge-sharing workshops organized for the depository libraries in developing countries to include outreach in their activities;

70. *Acknowledges* the role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in enhancing knowledge-sharing and networking activities to ensure access to the vast store of United Nations knowledge for delegates, permanent missions of Member States, the Secretariat, researchers and depository libraries worldwide, takes note of the proposal to rename the library the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge-Sharing Centre, reflecting its new direction, and also takes note of the proposal to change the designation of the depository libraries to partner libraries;

71. *Notes with appreciation* the Personal Knowledge Management initiative to assist representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff in the use of information products and tools as a complement to the traditional training programmes;

72. *Encourages* the Secretariat to develop and implement cost-neutral measures to provide Member States with secure access to the information currently accessible only on the Intranet of the Secretariat (iSeek), taking note that Member States have access to iSeek only through the facilities of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library;

VI
Outreach services

73. *Acknowledges* that the outreach services provided by the Department of Public Information continue to work towards promoting awareness of the role and work of the United Nations;

74. *Welcomes* the educational outreach activities of the Department through the United Nations Works programme and the Global Teaching and Learning Project to reach educators and young people worldwide via a range of multimedia platforms, and encourages the United Nations Works programme to continue to develop further its partnerships with global media networks and celebrity advocates and the Global Teaching and Learning Project to further expand its activities to teachers and students in primary, intermediate and secondary schools;

75. *Notes* the importance of the continued implementation by the Department of Public Information of the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as mandated by the General Assembly, and requests the Department to consider how best to maximize the benefits derived from the programme by extending, inter alia, its duration and the number of its participants;

76. *Welcomes* the movement towards educational outreach and the orientation of the *UN Chronicle*, both print and online editions, and, to this end, encourages the *UN Chronicle* to continue to develop co-publishing partnerships, collaborative educational activities and events, including the "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar series, with civil society organizations and institutions of higher learning;

77. *Takes note* of the intention of the Department of Public Information to have the *UN Chronicle* magazine evolve into a journal called "UN Affairs", and requests, for further consideration, a comprehensive and detailed report on the progress of the project in due course;

78. *Reaffirms* the important role that guided tours play as a means of reaching out to the general public, and takes note of the efforts undertaken by the Department of Public Information in organizing exhibitions on important United Nations-related issues within existing mandates at United Nations Headquarters and at other United Nations offices as a useful tool for reaching out to the general public;

79. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to strengthen its role as a focal point for two-way interaction with civil society relating to those priorities and concerns of the Organization identified by Member States;

80. *Commends*, in a spirit of cooperation, the United Nations Correspondents Association for its ongoing activities and for its Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Scholarship Fund, which sponsors journalists from developing countries to come to the United Nations Headquarters and report on the activities during the General Assembly, and further encourages the international community to continue its financial support for the Fund;

81. *Expresses its appreciation* for the efforts and contribution of United Nations Messengers of Peace, Goodwill Ambassadors and other advocates to promote the work of the United Nations and to enhance international public

awareness of its priorities and concerns, and calls upon the Department of Public Information to continue to involve them in its communications and media strategies and outreach activities;

VII
Final remarks

82. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirty-first session and to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of all recommendations and requests contained in the present resolution;

83. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to make every effort to ensure that the level of services provided by the Department of Public Information is maintained throughout the period of the implementation of the capital master plan;

84. *Strongly urges* the Secretary-General to accede to the request by Member States to provide additional passes to press officers of Member States to gain access to areas that are deemed restricted, in order to effectively and comprehensively report on high-level meetings that include officials of delegations of Member States;

85. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session;

86. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fourth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

Draft decision
Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 110 to 112 and to appoint Antigua and Barbuda and Zambia as members of the Committee on Information.

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